

Freedom of Thought

As the Theosophical Society has spread far and wide over the world, and as members of all religions have become members of it without surrendering the special dogmas, teachings and beliefs of their respective faiths, it is thought desirable to emphasize the fact that there is no doctrine, no opinion, by whomsoever taught or held, that is in any way binding on any member of the Society, none which any member is not free to accept or reject. Approval of its three Objects is the sole condition of membership. No teacher, or writer, from H. P. Blavatsky onwards, has any authority to impose his or her teachings or opinions on members. Every member has an equal right to follow any school of thought, but has no right to force the choice on any other. Neither a candidate for any office nor any voter can be rendered ineligible to stand or to vote, because of any opinion held, or because of membership in any school of thought. Opinions or beliefs neither bestow privileges nor inflict penalties. The Members of the General Council earnestly request every member of the Theosophical Society to maintain, defend and act upon these fundamental principles of the Society, and also fearlessly to exercise the right of liberty of thought and of expression thereof, within the limits of courtesy and consideration for others.

Freedom of the Society

The Theosophical Society, while cooperating with all other bodies whose aims and activities make such cooperation possible, is and must remain an organization entirely independent of them, not committed to any objects save its own, and intent on developing its own work on the broadest and most inclusive lines, so as to move towards its own goal as indicated in and by the pursuit of those objects and that Divine Wisdom which in the abstract is implicit in the title 'The Theosophical Society'.

Since Universal Brotherhood and the Wisdom are undefined and unlimited, and since there is complete freedom for each and every member of the Society in thought and action, the Society seeks ever to maintain its own distinctive and unique character by remaining free of affiliation or identification with any other organization.



THE THEOSOPHIST

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THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

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The Theosophical Society is composed of students, belonging to any religion in the world or to none, who are united by their approval of the Society's Objects, by their wish to remove religious antagonisms and to draw together men of goodwill, whatsoever their religious opinions, and by their desire to study religious truths and to share the results of their studies with others. Their bond of union is not the profession of a common belief, but a common search and aspiration for Truth. They hold that Truth should be sought by study, by reflection, by purity of life, by devotion to high ideals, and they regard Truth as a prize to be striven for, not as a dogma to be imposed by authority. They consider that belief should be the result of individual study or intuition, and not its antecedent, and should rest on knowledge, not on assertion. They extend tolerance to all, even to the intolerant, not as a privilege they bestow but as a duty they perform, and they seek to remove ignorance, not punish it. They see every religion as an expression of the Divine Wisdom and prefer its study to its condemnation, and its practice to proselytism. Peace is their watchword, as Truth is their aim.

Theosophy is the body of truths which forms the basis of all religions, and which cannot be claimed as the exclusive possession of any. It offers a philosophy which renders life intelligible, and which demonstrates the justice and the love which guide its evolution. It puts death in its rightful place, as a recurring incident in an endless life, opening the gateway to a fuller and more radiant existence. It restores to the world the Science of the Spirit, teaching man to know the Spirit as himself and the mind and body as his servants. It illuminates the scriptures and doctrines of religions by unveiling their hidden meanings, and thus justifying them at the bar of intelligence, as they are ever justified in the eyes of intuition.

Members of the Theosophical Society study these truths, and theosophists endeavour to live them. Everyone willing to study, to be tolerant, to aim high, and to work perseveringly, is welcomed as a member, and it rests with the member to become a true theosophist.

A Theosophy for Tomorrow

TIM BOYD

I would like to discuss the Theosophical Society, the organization that came into being as the vehicle for the communication of “Theosophy”, a word that has never really been defined. Sometimes it makes things a bit difficult for us when people ask what *is* Theosophy. On occasion I have thought that it would be nice to have a brief, concise answer. But we have not been given that, and probably, it is good that we have not.

This is not to say that certain definitions have not been put forward at different times, particularly by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (HPB). I am drawn to two in particular: the one where she speaks of Theosophy as being the “accumulated wisdom of the ages, tested and verified by generations of seers”. That sounds very specific and concise. Certainly, it addresses the experiential nature of Theosophy, because it is verifiable and can be tested. But then, the question arises, what *is* this “accumulated wisdom of the ages”? If we are not calling it “Theosophy”, we are calling it by some other name, but still leaving it undefined.

HPB also made the comment on one occasion that Theosophy is “altruism, first and foremost”. This takes it to a more practical level. The practice of con-

scious, compassionate activity, which we identify as service, might come close to defining applied “Theosophy”. By its very nature, Theosophy is limitless, not bound by time, by particular concepts, or the language by which it has been expressed throughout time. To some extent it is easier to speak about what Theosophy is *not*, than what it *is*.

When the Theosophical Society (TS) was founded in 1875 it was the occasion at which Theosophy, in our contemporary sense, was reintroduced to humanity. It had never gone anywhere, nor disappeared, but the particular form in which we now encounter it was introduced as an elaboration on that which existed before. It has *always* been present, never diminished, but mostly unseen, unrecognized, and necessarily limited in order for us to grasp some measure of what it might be. When you experience it, you *know* it, but trying to put into words what it *is*, is a problem. HPB had that problem; the Buddha himself had the same problem.

The legend has it that the Buddha, at the moment of his enlightenment, had a profound realization that he could not possibly communicate the nature of what he had experienced. Initially, his decision was not even to try, because he thought

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we would not be able to understand it. Obviously, he changed his mind, and attempted for the next fifty years of his life to engender the experience of enlightenment through various means, geared toward a variety of human temperaments. This Wisdom Tradition has been periodically reintroduced to address human capacity as it develops, and to address human need at various different times in our unfoldment. We find ourselves in one of those moments when Theosophy, in its fullest form yet, is available.

During her lifetime HPB was plagued with the realization that the world was not ready for the Wisdom Teachings that she came to share. In fact, she said that it would be 100 years before it would be possible for us to grasp these teachings. She spent the last years of her life in London, where she wrote her master works with which we are familiar: *The Secret Doctrine*, *The Voice of the Silence*, *The Key to Theosophy* — an explosion of writings about Wisdom.

At that time she gathered around herself an inner group of twelve people that she began to teach with the hope that the theosophical message could find a true home within their hearts, where it could be experienced and then expressed. She commented in her initial writings about the founding of what was then to be the Esoteric Section (which later became the Esoteric School), that the TS was two diametrically opposed things: a “stupendous success” in terms of popularizing theosophical *ideas*, but also a “dead

failure” in terms of the Theosophy that was the intent of those who sent her to share it — *a lived and experienced expression* of a universal kinship, or brotherhood.

When *The Secret Doctrine* was published, a regular and growing group of inquirers gathered around HPB in question-and-answer sessions about the meaning of this work. Years after her death, the notes that one of the participants, Robert Bowen, had taken during those meetings were found among his papers by his son. Over the years they have become familiar to most theosophical students. Sometimes they have the title “Madame Blavatsky on How to Study Theosophy”, and other times “*The Secret Doctrine* and Its Study”. These are very short notes, fascinating comments, less than ten pages in length.

HPB was very much aware that what she had come to bring could not be understood during the brief span of her lifetime. When asked about *The Secret Doctrine*, one of the things that she said was that it is just a small fragment of the greater Wisdom Teaching that is known to those of a higher level of development. She also said that it was “as much as the world is capable of receiving through the next century”. This is profound, seems to be very direct, clear, and understandable. If she had said this to us, we would have probably let it go at that, but somebody raised the question: “You say that this is all that the world is capable of receiving, but what do you mean by ‘the world’?”

Her answer was: “The world is Man [humanity] living in [its] personal nature.”

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The world is that amalgamation of the minds of all of us living in our personal nature. That perhaps *is* clearer. “Personality” being the body, the emotional nature, the lower mind, the desire realm, *kāma-manas*, all those terms are used to describe the ordinary level of consciousness within which we function.

The progression of Theosophy as we have come to know it has passed through a variety of ways in which it has been expressed. To many, it began and ended with HPB. But the fact is that, as things moved along, Annie Besant and C. W. Leadbeater arose. This second wave of Theosophists made the sincere attempt to link these teachings to contemporary science, and to make the teachings more accessible. So you had *Occult Chemistry*, *Thought Forms*, the various ideas related to evolution, and the growing influence of Darwinian evolutionary thought.

Some of these links that were attempted were excellent, some of them, with time, did not hold up as well. But still, the ideas, concepts, language, that did not exist previously, were being developed and elaborated. This is the trend from Blavatsky, Olcott, Sinnett, Judge, and the group that first appeared, moving on to Besant, Leadbeater, Krishnamurti, Sri Ram, Taimni, and others. In every case there has been some, not *addition* to the teachings or understanding, but the addition of *another way of viewing* what we call Theosophy, of expressing how it might be of value and capable of being practiced within the Theosophical Society.

One of the great regrets of HPB’s life as a teacher was that she was the one who first introduced the idea of the Masters of the Wisdom to the Western world. It was a foreign concept to Western minds, and by virtue of its seemingly exotic nature it was almost universally misunderstood. This led to the desecration of the names and import of the Mahatmas. In our times we can see how it has even progressed to a commercialization available on the internet. The names of the Mahatmas and concepts related to them have been so bandied about today as to become distorted and trivialized. For one whose esteem and experience with them was so great, HPB’s regret is understandable.

The last letter that was received from the Mahatmas came in 1900 to Annie Besant, in which he wrote: “The cant about the Masters must be silently but firmly put down.” This was because all of the uninformed, hypocritical, and sanctimonious talk was throwing up a cloud of confusion, glamor, hypocrisy, and distorted ideas that deformed any potential benefit.

In thinking about the arc of the TS’s work since its founding, it is worth remembering a clear statement that HPB made regarding a periodic strengthening of the theosophical impulse. The language HPB used was that at the last quarter of every century there would be “an outpouring or upheaval of spirituality”. I had been a member of the TS for one year at the time of the World Congress held in New York City in 1975, the centenary of the founding of the TS.

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Many people had come to the Congress from all over the world and, this being the beginning of the last quarter of the century, there was a great anticipation of what direction this new impulse and spiritual upheaval would be coming from. Because HPB had been so emphatic about the nature of the last quarter of the century, many different, sometimes strange, ideas were circulating. Depending on who one talked with, one would hear about everything from a reincarnation of Blavatsky herself, to the appearance of one of the Masters.

One of the luminaries attending the Congress was Geoffrey Barborka, author of a number of significant theosophical books. One of his books was titled *HPB, Tibet, and Tulku*. The Tulku idea is the one that I would like to consider. Tulku is the process in which an expansive overshadowing consciousness expresses itself through an individual, or individuals. A familiar example is the Dalai Lama tradition. In that tradition it is said that the consciousness of Chenrezig (Avalokiteśvara) has expressed itself now in fourteen incarnations of the Dalai Lama. Time after time it incarnates, or expresses itself through its chosen vehicle. Barborka's contention was that the Tulku process was also in effect with respect to HPB — that her work was an expression of such an overshadowing consciousness.

So in 1975 the question for many was, “where will this overshadowing consciousness be coming from?” Looking back to that time, people were trying to discern who were the individuals bring-

ing this heightened spiritual impulse, or who was *the person* that came to bring this greater presentation of occult knowledge, as HPB had said. Even now it is difficult to say. However, if we look a little more deeply, think a bit differently, then it might be apparent, for, in every case, this overshadowing consciousness necessarily exceeds any individual. In fact, one of the statements of the current Dalai Lama has been that the next incarnation of the Dalai Lama may appear as multiple individuals. Obviously, consciousness is not limited to any single body or form.

There is a quote from *The Mahatma Letters* that is worth thinking about. It was written to A. P. Sinnett and, as often was the case, it was an attempt by one of the Mahatmas to get Sinnett to look more deeply, broaden his view, and help him think differently: “There is more to this Movement than you have any inkling of. The work of the TS is linked with similar work going on secretly in all parts of the world.” So when we think of the TS work, it might be a mistake on our part to try to limit it to this organization. As was said to Sinnett, perhaps there is more going on than we have an inkling of.

What was happening toward the close of the 20th century? A short list would include such things as the declaration of “Earth Day” that occurred first in 1970 as a national event in the US. Very quickly it became a globally recognized occasion, now taking place in more than 193 countries and coordinated globally by the Earth Day Network. Another powerful

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idea that took root was The Gaia Theory, in which a group of scientists from varied fields put forward that the Earth is more than a staging ground for a multiplicity of biological processes, but, in the same way that a human being is a greater whole comprised of countless lesser lives (cells, bacteria, and so on), the Earth (Gaia) is a living being, a yet greater life and consciousness within which all the other life forms participate. Out of it came this exploding influence of the ecological movement and environmentalism. The chief characteristic of all of these movements was their grasp and elaboration of the fundamental idea that life is One.

At the closing of the last century there was also the growth of spiritual psychology and transpersonal psychology. A spiritualized feminism came into being with a deeper focus than the difference in bodies that we occupy, but which addressed the suppression of qualities of consciousness which gave rise to oppressive social and relationship structures. So consciousness, and the inner causes which then led to outer effects, became the focus. During the same time the worldwide web came into being — an agency which for both good and ill has had a linking effect on humanity. All of these developments and more were being fed and growing right in front of our eyes. But most missed this “spiritual upheaval” because it was *a person* that we were anticipating.

This is a brief description of the trajectory of contemporary Theosophy. So, where do we stand now? In the letter

from the Mahachohan there are a number of profound statements. In talking about Theosophy, he says: “The true religion and philosophy offers a solution to every problem.” The contention was that theosophical teachings, being true, ultimately will triumph, but the solution to every problem is what he proposed as the expression of a realized Theosophy. The question for us, and it should probably be a question that we ask ourselves daily, is: Where do we stand in relation to this type of radical expression of what Theosophy is intended to be? Has Theosophy solved every problem for us? It is a question worth asking, because “the true religion and philosophy”, the true Theosophy, offers the solution to *every* problem.

Those who have come before us have passed on something wonderful, unique, of quality, because to the extent that we have been able to test it, it has been verified for us. If this were not the case, we would not be here now. Why bother if the principles have no recognizable effect? It is this aspect of demonstration that is central to the idea of a “solution to every problem”. We have been given vital concepts and ideas that are profound. This forms the initial basis of our study, the initial focus of our meditation.

However, whether they are theosophical concepts, scientific, Christian, or atheistic, there are no concepts with the capacity to solve *every* problem. If concepts had the capacity for universal solution, then those who are the best read, the most fluent in quotation and reference,

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would be the enlightened ones. Experience does not bear this out.

So what is it that will point us in the direction that is suggested by the quotation from the Mahachohan? Probably it is not a mystery to anyone that there are a variety of issues around the globe causing enormous suffering for the human family. We do not need to go down a list; we see it all around us. Over 143 years now, we have had the opportunity to gradually inculcate these profound ideas and teachings into the consciousness of our world. However we may conceive of it, the focus of the work of the TS has always been related to Unity — the expression through various means of the oneness of life, the wholeness of being.

The following is something that has been my experience, but I would ask you to consider it for yourself. For anyone who embraces and explores these teachings with sincerity, who allows for a deepening of self-awareness, who engages in the work of coming to know oneself in a non-superficial manner, the unavoidable outcome is that such a person necessarily becomes a healer. By this I do not mean that we take on the practice of some specific form of the healing arts, even though that may be the choice for someone of that temperament. What happens is that our very presence becomes something that heals — the restoration of wholeness occurs effortlessly through our words and thoughts, through who we have become.

When we talk about the unity of all life,

it is an expression. We can perhaps describe it, talk about what we mean, but for many people the unity or oneness of life is more than an expression. It is an experience — one which in a partial sense is familiar to almost everyone. Although it may be only momentary, it is often what propels us unto a spiritual path, because such a path is what aligns most closely with our memory of that moment of wholeness. “Unity” and “Oneness of life” are phrases, ideas, which represent something. Behind those words and language there is something else waiting for us. If the Theosophical Society is to be meaningful in this particular moment, it is *not* going to be because we have a better set of concepts than others. Even though I feel that we do, what is that going to do for us? A gradual inculcation has been taking place. Theosophy, from the point of view of HPB, was something for a time beyond her stay in this world — for tomorrow. I believe that *this* is that time.

Wherever we come from in the world, the rising challenges that we face today speak to a need for healing, for a consciousness that does not divide, but that can unify. Wherever we see suffering coming into the world, if it is at the hands of someone who is claiming Theosophy, *that* is not Theosophy. It is *not* something that divides or separates. The “great heresy of separateness” is what we are here to address, first within ourselves, then it can be communicated outwardly. But until it is in fact addressed, our efforts will be superficial at best.

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So this is the arc. We have this history, the blessing of many great individuals who have lived, died, and moved on to make this moment possible. We are in that same process. *All* of us are here just for a moment. In this brief span we will do what we can for those who are yet to come. But at this particular time, it is well

for us to recognize a need and a possibility. To ignore it, does harm to the opportunity that we have been given. This moment calls for healers in the world. There is no teaching or context broader than the one with which we have associated ourselves. Dig into it! Allow it to dig into you, and watch what happens. ✧

If this danger [of dogmatism and biased judgement, which kill that vitality which living truth alone can impart] be averted, then the Society will live on into and through the twentieth century. It will gradually leaven and permeate the great mass of thinking and intelligent people with its large-minded and noble ideas of Religion, Duty, and Philanthropy. Slowly but surely it will burst asunder the iron fetters of creeds and dogmas, of social and caste prejudices; it will break down racial and national antipathies and barriers, and will open the way to the practical realization of the Brotherhood of all men. Through its teaching, through the philosophy which it has rendered accessible and intelligible to the modern mind, the West will learn to understand and appreciate the East at its true value. Further, the development of the psychic powers and faculties, the premonitory symptoms of which are already visible in America, will proceed healthily and normally. Mankind will be saved from the terrible dangers, both mental and bodily, which are inevitable when that unfolding takes place, as it threatens to do, in a hotbed of selfishness and all evil passions. Man's mental and psychic growth will proceed in harmony with his moral improvement, while his material surroundings will reflect the peace and fraternal goodwill which will reign in his mind, instead of the discord and strife which is everywhere apparent around us today.

H. P. Blavatsky
The Key to Theosophy

Contemplative Living in the Modern World

LINDA OLIVEIRA

WE live on a planet — a veritable jewel — floating through the vastness of space, a jewel which provides a home for a tremendous diversity of life forms. In its natural state, Earth is *extraordinarily* beautiful, with vast tracts of ocean, silent deserts, majestic mountains, glistening giant masses of ice, convulsing volcanoes, vast underwater and underground worlds, celestial skies, extraordinary animal and bird life, and verdant vegetation.

Then there is us! What happens when you superimpose humankind upon this scenario? For one thing, you have the potential for massive change to this jewel in space. Humans have been the harbingers of substantial change to our planet. Why is this? It really comes down to *manas*, the thinking principle, which is a unique gift, but also our greatest challenge. It is a gift, because the mind's potential is almost limitless; and it is the transformed mind that enables our ultimate Liberation from the Wheel of Birth and Rebirth. But in the meantime, the mind is also our greatest challenge. This is because, in the first place, the stronger the mind, the stronger

the sense of "I", and therefore also the stronger the tendency towards selfishness and self-importance. Also, inevitably, due to the apparently limitless creativity of human thought, numerous life forms in our natural world have been damaged or —worse still — annihilated. Furthermore, humans are social creatures. Sometimes this social noise becomes such a preoccupation that our spiritual roots are forgotten, or else scant attention is given to the spiritual pole of our being. For these kinds of reasons, planet Earth becomes a playground for many self-centred interests. Buildings replace natural habitats more and more; similarly, our disregard for the life around us replaces an active and caring relationship with life and a genuine spiritual connection.

Perhaps partly for this reason, for millennia some individuals have chosen to live a particular kind of life which binds them back on a daily basis to the Source of being — to God, Tao, Brahman, or whatever name is preferred. This inevitably requires the sacrifice of certain worldly things, and the adoption of a specific and

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simple way of living in some kind of cloistered, or semi-cloistered, community.

A keen sense of life's depth, and devotion to a vaster Intelligence, along with a wish to adopt a dedicated and religious mode of life, has driven a small proportion of people to gather together in various contemplative communities. Some kind of inner calling has spoken to them.

Monastic communities have existed, and continue to exist, within great religious traditions of the world. One website speaks of contemplative communities in the United States which live "on islands and in forests, behind churches on busy highways and among working-class homes on urban streets", communities which are "obedient to a discipline of prayer". <globalsistersreport.org> We also have a number of Theosophical communities around the world today, including our International Headquarters, which help provide an environment in which reflection on life's deeper Truths may flourish.

What, therefore, are the characteristics of a contemplative community? Here is one description: "A contemplative community is characterised by simplicity and by helping others to realise the depth of their human connection with God and in all of creation. . . nourished daily by a rhythm of prayer, work, and leisure." This same website states: "To be a contemplative — and everyone has a built-in capacity to be one — we must come to a profound self-knowledge that is both frightening and liberating." It goes on: "We learn to surrender and yield to a God whom we cannot understand most of the time but dare to

trust." <sistersofthegoodshepherd.com> We can note some key points here about what it means to actually be a contemplative: self-knowledge, liberation, and surrender to a greater power.

However, what of those who have a definite leaning towards contemplation but whose life, for various reasons, has to be lived in the everyday world? This probably applies to many TS members. In order to consider this question, we need to ask three further questions: What is contemplation? What does it mean to adopt a contemplative life? How is it possible to live in a more contemplative way in the everyday world?

The "how" question is particularly important because it relates to the way in which we live, practically speaking. Theory needs to be transformed into practice or else it does not serve a very useful purpose.

What is Contemplation?

So, just what is contemplation? The word itself derives from the Latin *contemplationem*, "act of looking at", also from a further term *contemplari*, "to gaze attentively, observe, consider", originally "to mark out a space for observation".

<etymonline.com>

From what we have noted so far, it can be seen that contemplation requires deep reflection, a dedicated mental space which we create deliberately for this purpose, attentive observation of the world, ultimately leading to a profound Self-knowledge. Overall there is a religious kind of intent.

Stages of Yoga and the Meditative Process

It is also both helpful and relevant to consider this subject in the context of meditation. This is because in its entirety meditation is a multi-stage process which *culminates* in deep contemplation. The Indian sage, Patañjali, gave a number of instructions for meditation which are used in the yogic tradition.

As is well-known, Patañjali divided yoga into eight stages: 1. *Yama* (restraint), 2. *Niyama* (observance), 3. *Āsana* (postures), 4. *Prānāyāma* (regulating the breath), followed by four further stages specific to meditation practice, and the first three of these help indicate what is required before we can come to a state of true contemplation:

5. *Pratyāhāra* (withdrawal of consciousness from the senses): In day-to-day life we tend to be sense-driven beings, our thought processes being largely dominated by sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch. We are therefore also driven by those desires and aversions which are frequently fuelled in some way through the senses. For example, we see a favourite kind of ice cream and then suddenly have a desire to taste it. Or we may hear some appealing music and have a consequent desire to hear more such music. Then again, we may eat something which tastes unpleasant and therefore develop a definite aversion to that kind of food. Or we smell something we do not care for and recoil. Therefore, the effect of the activity of the senses on the mental and emotional fields may be far stronger,

and more frequent than we imagine — until we finally observe what is actually happening.

On the other hand, *pratyāhāra* is a very calming process, helping to prepare for deeper meditation, requiring the senses to be focused, and used in a particular way. One might think that this only applies to the beginning of regular, formal meditation practice. However, Ven. Prof. Samdhong Rinpoche made a significant and perhaps surprising statement. He observed that the necessary calming down is achieved not through meditation but by living an ordinary, routine life. There is an elegant simplicity inherent in this.

Here is a very recent and practical example, one which most of us probably will not forget during this lifetime. It made gripping news. We witnessed the recent dramatic unfoldment of events surrounding a soccer team and their coach who were trapped in a cave in Thailand. What helped the boys to stay calm while they were trapped? They were basically taught *pratyāhāra* by their coach, who fortuitously happened to be a former novice Buddhist monk. It was reported that he

helped keep the boys breathing and emotionally balanced during the crisis, and also readied them for their hours-long treacherous escape guided by expert cave divers. In the process, he gave them vital tools they needed — teaching them how to tap into their own tranquillity and inner stillness. He taught them how to keep *themselves* calm, a minor but magnificent distinction.”

<washingtonpost.com>

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6. *Dhāranā* (concentration): In concentration, we try to understand and control the mind so that it no longer reacts restlessly. This has been described by Adelaide Gardner as “a technical re-education of the lower mind, so that it becomes obedient to the Self”. We can think of *dhāranā* as an antidote to the monkey mind. Through concentration one can direct steady attention towards anything — even something that has no appeal whatsoever to the observer. For anyone who has ever had to concentrate on a difficult or disliked subject at school in order to pass an exam, this skill would be quite well understood. When we concentrate we hold the mind to a single idea at will. This could be any physical object, a particular idea, or perhaps a revered figure; basically, everything else is excluded and the *will* is brought to bear on the mind. Also, when concentration wanders, returning to the breath has proven to be highly beneficial.

7. *Dhyāna* (meditation): Meditation proper begins when active thought ceases, and we become aware of the inner meaning of the object of meditation. There is an uninterrupted flow of the mind towards the object of meditation, the intuitional activities of the mind being engaged. In fact, meditation is a kind of resting state because thought is led to rest quietly on a concept that has many overtones. Subtler mental activity is invoked. Only the one concept is experienced, with all its richness. Ernest Wood has described meditation as a flow *into* the object, not past it. We experience the essential

nature of the object of meditation, “like a tune sung or a wind blowing over the soul”, as described by Adelaide Gardner. In other words, meditation is refreshing; it can, and does, transform the mind — at least to some extent — each time it is experienced.

The stage of *dhyāna* or meditation is beautiful and profound; yet, still the state of contemplation has not been reached.

8. *Samādhi* (contemplation): *Samādhi* is a term denoting contemplation which is used in Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism and various yogic schools. In this final stage the meditator becomes one with the object of meditation — there is only a consciousness of the object of meditation. This results in an expansion of consciousness that lifts one out of the little self into the greater Self. One is open to, and feels, unity with the One Life. Patañjali referred to it as the return of the power of pure consciousness to its essential form. This condition is practically beyond verbal description. Consequently, contemplation is a difficult subject to convey in everyday language. Perhaps it may be described as pure awareness — not self-awareness, not awareness by us *of* something else, which is still a case of subject and object; but rather, experience *without* any sense of self. Or we can think of it as union with the Divine, with that which is Sacred. It should not surprise us, therefore, that *samādhi* is experienced only by the few.

In the Monier-Williams Sanskrit Dictionary, *samādhi* is described in a number of ways such as: putting together, joining; completion, accomplishment, conclusion;

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intense contemplation of any particular object meditated upon. This adds some further nuances to the term.

Helen Zahara, a former General Secretary of the Australian Section, wrote:

[I]n that moment of absorption there may come a stillness of the mind, which is not negative or passive, but is dynamic and alert. This is the state of contemplation. Now, it is suggested, [the object of meditation] should be dropped altogether from the mind, while the mind remains in that still, absorbed, poised state of consciousness. The mind is now emptied of images and forms, and in that moment it is free and open to receive intimations from the inner world of the Self, to experience intuition, *buddhi*. To use a well-known analogy, the mind is as a clear, placid lake, able to reflect the divine consciousness from within. . . . In that state of contemplation, which is a state of consciousness beyond form, the individual can have spiritual insight which, however brief, can transform his understanding, can expand his awareness, lifting him out of his usually limited field into a new vision and a realization of the deeper reality which exists within. <dzyantheosophy.org>

While describing such a state is limited by the constraints of language, its effects are clear enough: transformation, expansion, a rebirth into a new world, suffusion with the Divine.

Stages of *samādhi* or contemplation have been mentioned in some writings. In her book, *Practical Mysticism*, Evelyn Underhill wrote of three forms or stages

of contemplation, each one deeper than the previous one:

1. *Pouring oneself into life forms, into multiplicity, with the eye of contemplation: the "discovery of God in his creatures"*.

This involves a loving and patient exploration of the world, widening the consciousness until one finds in every manifestation of life the expression of God. One realizes the movement of *Lila*, the sport or play of God. This can be done practically through stretching the will towards one of the many manifestations of life that surround one from alp to insect, and "pouring oneself out towards it", to use Evelyn Underhill's words. She spoke of looking with the eye of contemplation to determine the celestial quality of something, for example, the most dissipated tabby cat on the streets. From this, she asserted, "old barriers will vanish". This is seeing everything with an equal eye. It is "a veritable condition of awareness", a "direct perception". Then it is necessary to surrender oneself, to absorb.

2. *Finding and feeling the Eternal, the ground of life, unconditioned*

She used a plant as an example of something with which you have direct communion. But this very recognition entails a consciousness of deeper realities; one will now "find and feel the Infinite and Eternal". In the first stage, there was a deliberate inward retreat and gathering together of one's faculties through recollection. Now, however, attention is directed toward a plane of existence with which bodily senses have

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no attachments. There is an intense and vivid silence. One has plunged into darkness, the Cloud of Unknowing. To some, this state brings joy and peace; to others, fear. With control of attention, the trained contemplative can recapture this state of awareness again and again.

3. *Effortlessness*

Up until now effort has been involved. But Evelyn Underhill then wrote of the contemplator *letting go*, with no striving and pushing, dwelling quietly in this place of darkness, St. John of the Cross' "Night of the Spirit". She observed that the last fragments of selfhood must be sought out and killed. This is reminiscent of the aspects of self to be killed which are mentioned in *Light on the Path*. Evelyn Underhill wrote: "union with Reality can only be a union of love; a glad and humble self-mergence in the universal life". One yields to unmeasured Love. You must "die into", melt into the Whole. From this self-surrender you will be reborn into another "world". What was felt as an emptiness is now a mighty energy, vitality, poured into the soul—a state known to genuine mystics.

Contemplation was described by J. J. van der Leeuw in these poetic words:

It is only when the cup of our being has been emptied of personality, that it can be filled with the wine of our divine Life, and when this Life is first experienced in meditation, it is like the entrance into a new world, no longer one of appearances, of phenomena, but one of consciousness, one in which we are identified with that which we desire to know.

[<dzyantheosophy.org/the-process.html>](http://dzyantheosophy.org/the-process.html)

So it can be seen that just as meditation is a process so, too, is contemplation, which deepens progressively.

What does it mean to adopt a contemplative life?

It is self-evident that, practically speaking, it is not possible to function in the everyday world while at the same time dwelling constantly in a permanent state of contemplation or *samādhi*. We actually require a sense of subject and object, experienced through our personal vehicles, to go about our daily business. However, it is possible for one with genuine spiritual inclinations to adopt a *more* contemplative life, generally speaking.

A contemplative life means a life which is thoughtful, which is reflective, and which makes time for introspection on life's deeper questions and meaning.

We are self-determining by nature. The *mānasic* principle is a precious gift, quickened long ages ago by the *Mānasaputra-s*, who are said to have incarnated in the then young humanity to awaken, or quicken, the human mind. This mind has depths and breadths which we are yet to traverse. And *with* this mind, around which our higher evolution turns, we most certainly have the ability to intelligently consider what *kind* of life we want to live. It may be easy to drift without much awareness from one year to another; yet it is perfectly possible for the person in the everyday world to adopt a more contemplative life. This may require change.

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It is commonly said that people do not change. Perhaps most do not, in any significant way. Yet meaningful change *is* possible for any person, at any age. For example, can we consider *how* we are living our lives now, and whether this is fully aligned with our deepest ethical principles? Moments of reflection can help make this clearer.

How is it possible to live more contemplatively in the everyday world?

If we were constantly in a state of deep contemplation, it would be difficult to deal with the numerous mundane aspects of daily living. But what we *can* do is learn *how* to live in a way which is more thoughtful, not driven constantly by the dictates of the world, and the rush and bustle of human affairs. Initially, this necessitates looking at our lives as impartially as possible — conducting a self-audit, if you like.

Recall a number of hints that have already been given:

Pratyāhāra: The necessary calming down for meditation is achieved very simply — by living an ordinary, routine life. Anything which is a preparation for meditation is ultimately also a preparation for contemplation. An ordinary routine life may seem dull to people who want constant excitement from external sources. However, the reality is that such a life can be remarkably full and rich.

Concentration — holding the mind to a single idea at will: It is easy to be distracted by noise. When concentration wanders, returning to the breath can be highly beneficial. For breathing is a micro-

cosm of the inbreathing and outbreathing of the macrocosm. It quietens one down, calming the senses and vehicles, thus making us more available to the deeper truths of life.

Meditation: Recall that the stage of *dhyāna*, or meditation, engages intuitional activities of mental life. Changing our mental habits may help us to readily solve problems intuitively, with a certain growth of insight and serenity. After reviewing a problem, it can be lifted into silence, the mind consciously emptied, so problem-solving occurs in a more contemplative state, beyond the rational mind.

Contemplation: Then we come to contemplation. In this regard, several points about contemplative living by Brother David Steindl-Rast, the well-known Benedictine monk, can be of interest even to the lay person:

He mentions that the term “contemplative life” does not simply refer to secluded life in a cloister. As a vocation, it refers to a particular form of life in which, ideally at least, every detail of daily living is oriented towards recollection. Unlimited mindfulness is involved, the “inner attitude by which we find meaning”. Consequently Brother Steindl-Rast speaks of living in a mindful way, also equating gratitude with happiness. In a monastic setting, he speaks of cultivating the joy of grateful detachment by becoming more mindful; for example, closing doors mindfully, turning off lights when leaving a room, treating books with reverence, not letting the tap drip, placing a pair of sandals neatly, and so on.

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However, it is clear that these simple, small applications of mindfulness can be practised anywhere as part of a more contemplative life; we do not need to dwell in a monastery.

Then he mentions solitude as an integral part of this tradition. We may not live in a cloistered environment, but are we comfortable with being alone at times? Not just alone with a television or music playing, but actually alone and quiet — without external noise? Some may fear this; yet solitude can be very centring and refreshing. Also, this invites us to stop — meaning, for some, stepping out of the daily rush for a while.

David Steindl-Rast also spoke of “a lifetime of self-surrender in detachment”, a life of “voluntary poverty” as described in the Christian tradition. He explained voluntary poverty not as giving up things but, rather, as partly an exercise *in* detachment and partly an exercise *of* detachment. To him, detachment does not mean stripping ourselves of possessions, but stripping ourselves of selfishness. It results in a lifestyle of simple living, along with an ongoing search to define what is necessary and what is possible.

Let us now summarize the practical hints on contemplative living just mentioned which can be applied, to a greater or lesser extent, to an individual’s life in the world:

- ◆ A calm, routine life in which the senses are used in specific, focused ways and are not driven by our desires.
- ◆ Learning to hold the mind to a single

idea. Returning to the breath, watching the breath when the mind wanders.

- ◆ Learning to solve problems intuitively — after reviewing a problem, lifting the mind into silence and consciously emptying the mind.
- ◆ Orienting daily life towards recollection and living in a mindful way — both with small things, and also larger things that we undertake.
- ◆ Deliberate periods of silent solitude, in which it is far easier to contemplate life’s great truths.
- ◆ Voluntary poverty — detachment — simple living, stripping ourselves of selfishness, finding out what is really necessary in one’s life.

We can also add a seventh one to these six practical hints :

- ◆ Dwelling regularly on things that matter, those things which are of profound significance, for example the fact of impermanence, the purpose of our life, what is ultimately important and what is not, our duty to the lives around us, what relationship means, who we are now, and what kind of individual we aspire to become.

The Sense of Wonder

Lama Govinda mentioned that what opens the mind to the great mystery of life, to the Infinite within (not behind) the finite — to the Eternal within the ephemeral — is the “sense of wonder”. This has a kind of innocence about it; there is no egocentricity or a sense of duality when

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wonder is present. Have you ever looked in awe at the night sky? He maintained that this sense of wonder is what gives “depth to our experience or vision of the world”. It is the background without which the experience of freedom would not be possible, the starting point of every spiritual activity. Indeed, this sense of wonder is an excellent beginning as we learn to contemplate life ever deeply, only

to become filled with “the wine of our divine life”, as J. J. van der Leew put it. A contemplative life can begin with the way we choose to live right now. We can actively mould ourselves, like artists, by creating a vessel through which our deeper nature may manifest. A contemplative mind is a beautiful, cultured mind; and a contemplative life is an existence grounded in grace and refinement. ✧

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The real self is (in essence) the supreme Brahman, pure as space, . . . the secondless, having no other. So what else is there to know?

Verse from Sankaracharya's *Vivekachudamani*

What Is Theosophical Education?

VICENTE HAO CHIN, JR

IN recent years, there has been renewed interest in the establishment of theosophical schools in various parts of the world. The General Council of the Theosophical Society has approved establishing a new school in Adyar that is expected to start in 2019. The Philippines has six schools and plans to set up a seventh one by next year. The Indian Section has very recently reacquired the management of six schools that have been independently run for many decades, and the Section plans to transform them into theosophical schools. Argentina, Brazil, and Kenya have expressed serious interest in setting up such educational institutions. There are initiatives to convert the charity schools under the Theosophical Order of Service in India into theosophical schools as well.

It is timely then to review the question: What really is theosophical education? Is it *any* school that is run by theosophical organizations? Is it a school that teaches Theosophy?

Since the early years, theosophical leaders have used the phrase “theosophical education” to refer to a kind of educational

approach that embodies certain characteristics. A charity school run by the Theosophical Society is not necessarily a theosophical school in the strict sense.

Two years before her death, H. P. Blavatsky (HPB) stressed the importance of establishing theosophical schools. She described the objectives of such a school as follows:

If we had money, we would found schools which would turn out something else than reading and writing candidates for starvation. Children should above all be taught self-reliance, love for everyone, altruism, mutual charity, and more than anything else, to think and reason for themselves. We would reduce the purely mechanical work of the memory to an absolute minimum, and devote the time to the development and training of the inner senses, faculties, and latent capacities. We would endeavour to deal with each child as a unit, and to educate it so as to produce the most harmonious and equal unfoldment of its powers, in order that its special aptitudes should find their full natural development. We should aim at creating *free* men and women, free intellectually, free morally,

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unprejudiced in all respects, and above all things, *unselfish*. And we believe that much if not all of this could be obtained by *proper and truly theosophical* education. (*The Key to Theosophy*, Sec. 13)

Note that in the above statement, she said nothing about teaching Theosophy. Theosophical education is primarily about the unfolding of latent faculties and the nurturing of certain qualities in the individual.

N. Sri Ram, fifth president of the Theosophical Society, wrote in the same vein:

What we call Theosophical Education must be education in a real sense, not the inculcation of a few ideas which we may label as Theosophy. First of all, it has to be realized that education is primarily education of the individual, not instruction in any subject or the teaching of any technique, although these may be very necessary, and should come in incidentally. It is not imparting anything from without so much as the drawing out of what is within, the capacities that are already in the Ego or soul, fostering the process of its natural growth and development in its fresh manifestation at a period when such help is greatly needed. (*The Theosophist*, April 1960)

A pioneer in this kind of education is J. Krishnamurti, who had started eight schools in India, United States and England. He wrote:

The function of education is to create human beings who are integrated and therefore intelligent. . . . Education in the true sense is helping the individual to be mature and free, to flower greatly in love

and goodness. (*Education and the Significance of Life*, ch. 1 & 2)

Theosophical education, then, is meant to prepare a young individual to face not only the challenges of social life (such as career or financial stability), but to understand better the art and science of living and to have the capacity to live according to such insights. It involves an understanding of the growth process of human beings and to attain the highest possibilities of a truly mature individual.

It will be noted that the end of such a growth process is not simply material or social “success”, but the full development of a human being. While a theosophical school will help young people to develop needed skills to become effective in their career and attain financial stability, such skills are only a part of a larger goal which is the overall wholesomeness of the life of the individual. There is no point in making a person a financial success if the person is unhappy, unscrupulous, or evil. The present world situation is so mired in violence, injustice, greed and selfishness that any school that helps mold more of such people will actually be doing more harm than good to the world.

Personality Development

A theosophical school is first of all an institution for the development of the personality and character of the child. This is far more important than any skills that they learn in the institution.

Personality refers to that part of the human being that is molded primarily by the environment — habits, language,

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attitudes, relationships, beliefs, behavior, and so on. The molding happens from birth to adulthood. These can be simple things like patiently queuing in a line, brushing one's teeth every day, or smoking cigarettes. When the environment is unwholesome, then the child acquires an unwholesome personality — counterproductive habits, ineffective relationship approaches, wrong beliefs, biases, or other forms of conditionings. If these have already been learned from home or outside, then a theosophical school should guide them to undo these harmful qualities, such as through a self-awareness process.

A good and effective school is an environment that is deliberately designed to cultivate wholesome personality traits, healthy habits, self-discipline, respectfulness, positiveness, basic skills such as language proficiency, and so forth. They are taught by exposure and repetition after explaining to them why they are worthwhile behaviors. These traits are not inculcated using threats, coercion, punishments or even rewards. It is shown by example and imbibed through simple repetition of the behavior in a natural, cheerful, and even fun manner. Personality qualities are absorbed almost unconsciously in this way.

Character-Building

Character is quite different from personality. It arises from a conscious recognition of what is right and proper. It is the instilling and realization of wholesome values and their incorporation into one's daily life. While personality is the product

of habits, character is the product of insights and understanding.

It must be noted that wholesome personality development serves as an important foundation of character building. When the personality is badly formed, it can be a formidable obstacle to the development of right character. For example, a child that learns to be afraid (a personality trait) will tend to learn to lie (a fault in character). Fear becomes a barrier to the development of honesty and integrity. A child that learns to be angry as a mode of self-defense will become less capable of loving others because anger has the tendency to want to hurt another, a trait opposite to that of love.

This is the reason why personality and character development go hand in hand. One affects the other. A school environment must teach that unhelpful personality traits such as fear, violence, insecurity, or competitiveness are not encouraged or nurtured. Then the building of right character or the absorption of impersonal values becomes easier. The whole process starts from the entire culture of the school, involving the principal, headmaster, the faculty members, the staff, as well as the policies and regulations of the school. When children fear the teachers or the principal, then the nurturing process becomes unhealthy.

Becoming a Free Individual

A theosophical school should endeavor to cultivate minds that are open, free, rational and unprejudiced. Society has a powerful way of intimidating people to

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adopt its values, customs, and behaviors, even if such ways are wrong or harmful. Horrid examples are so-called “honor killings”, suicide bombings and genital mutilation. It does this unconsciously much of the time. Children grow up believing in many things that are absurd, contradictory, irrational, violent, and wrong. For example, when repeatedly told so, they easily slide into believing in a God who is perfect but who repents what he has done, or a God who is perfectly loving and at the same time sends his creatures to eternal hell. They also unknowingly adopt the behaviors of adults without having the chance to question whether they are wholesome or not, right or not. Thus they pick up the habit of smoking even if they know that cigarettes can cause cancer or shorten their lives.

A good school will help young people become aware of these invisible shackles of the mind. Then they have the option to free themselves from these chains. Therefore, a theosophical school cannot be a sectarian school — it cannot even be a “theosophical” school in the sense that it is trying to make students believe in such a thing as Theosophy. Its aim is to make the mind free in order that a person is capable of searching for the truth without imposed blinders.

Capacity for Happiness

A school must be a happy place. What is the point of being a famous writer, a computer genius or a multi-billionaire when one is unhappy? Many years ago, one of the richest persons in the world

committed suicide. His wealth did not give him meaning, peace, and happiness.

Nurturing the capacity for happiness in a person is a semi-science. It is based on the principle of cause and effect. In the same way that one can oppress and bully people to make them miserable, so can one appreciate and love others to make them feel accepted, loved, and happy.

A happy school does not mean an easy school. Students should be encouraged to take difficult challenges and explore new frontiers without the unhappiness caused by low grades, threats, or punishment. One may be tired, but one feels fulfilled.

Altruism

A human being has a conditioned personality that tends to be self-centered and self-protective. This is natural and is needed for survival. It has an evolutionary origin and it is a trait that humans have in common with animals. This is the source of selfishness in human beings.

On the other hand, human beings have a higher faculty of the mind that is capable of recognizing objective reality, fairness, and justice. For example, our outer personality will delight in finding someone’s wallet in a public place and wants to keep it for oneself. But our higher mind will recognize that it is someone else’s wallet and we need to return it to the rightful owner. The cultivation of this higher faculty is what truly makes us “civilized” and ethical. We think of the larger whole rather than just ourselves. We do not do unethical acts because if

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everyone else does what we do, then everyone will be harmed and society will be chaotic, violent and insecure.

A theosophical school therefore will nurture unselfish individuals who are ready to help others while recognizing the duty to protect and take care of one's own legitimate needs.

Transformative Education

Such a school needs to be a transformative one. Transformation means not just changing from one thing to another on the same level, but a change from one level to a higher and more holistic one. It entails the awakening of one's higher faculties and perceptive capacities — seeing what is just and right, appreciating love and compassion, seeing reality impersonally. In theosophical terms, it is the awakening of the higher triangle consisting of the higher mind, intuition and spirituality, and eventually, self-transcendence.

What about Teaching Theosophy?

The teaching of the Ageless Wisdom should be part of the curriculum of a theosophical school. It is meant to introduce perennial insights and wisdom of great sages and spiritual people. When they are true and clearly explained, they will strike a chord in the heart of the student, a recognition of the validity and truth of the principles. If they are false, they should be exposed as such during the free inquiry of a theosophical classroom. Theosophy should never be taught as a dogma where a student feels a subtle ostracism if they are not convinced of it.

In Golden Link College, several subjects

are added to the curriculum given by the government. Among them are Theosophy, Comparative Religion, and Philosophy. These are seedbeds of new ideas and concepts, they foster free discussions and debates without fear of being rejected for one's unconventional views.

Skills and Knowledge

The school of course needs to teach the competencies that one needs in the world — professional skills and knowledge, such as accountancy, computer proficiency, mathematics, and so on. But there are two kinds of skills: life skills and professional skills.

Life skills are competencies that make one effective in whatever one chooses to do, regardless of the field or profession that one is involved in. Examples of these are perseverance, patience, amiability, effectiveness in communication, critical thinking, resourcefulness, creativity, self-discipline, and positiveness. Without these, one becomes less effective in one's life-work.

Summary

A theosophical school endeavors to nurture in a wholesome way the whole human being, not just one's money-earning skills. Individuals with wholesome character, personality, and life skills can practically be effective in any profession or work that they may find themselves in. Professional or technical skills can be learned at any age, but the fundamental qualities of a person need to be established well from childhood.

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This is the important function of a theosophical school. Based on deep insights on the nature of human beings, their growth processes, origin, and destiny, the school develops a culture and curriculum that foster the growth of higher faculties,

making them more mature and effective. It prepares an individual for a life of meaningfulness, spirituality, happiness, and service. It seeks to nurture people who will make this world a harmonious and peaceful place. ✧

When the independent life of a child is not recognized with its own characteristics and its own ends, when the adult man interprets these characteristics and ends, which are different from his, as being errors in the child which he must make speed to correct, there arises between the strong and the weak a struggle which is fatal to mankind. For, it is truly upon the perfect and tranquil spiritual life of the child that depends the health or sickness of the soul, the strength or weakness of the character, the clearness or obscurity of the intellect. So if during the delicate and precious period of childhood, a sacrilegious form of servitude has been inflicted upon children, it will no longer be possible for people to accomplish great deeds successfully, and we have there the symbolic sense of the biblical story of the Tower of Babel.

The struggle between the adult and the child finds its expression — both within the family circle and at school — in what is still referred to by the old name of “Education”.

Maria Montessori
Peace and Education

Yoga Philosophy

TRUTH-SEEKER

[The following communication, from a European Theosophist will be read with attention and interest by Hindu students of Yoga. The references to “vital air”, “wind”, “tubular vessels”, “moon-fluid of immortality”, “chambers of the body”, and such like, may be incomprehensible to the materialist unfamiliar with the figurative nomenclature of mystics; but he who has advanced even a single pace along the road of self-development towards spirituality, will comprehend easily enough what is meant by these terms. — Editor, *The Theosophist*.]

IN the *Dublin University Magazine* for Oct., Nov., Dec. 1853, and Jan. 1854, is a series of papers, entitled “The Dream of Ravan”, containing much that is curious on this subject.

In the fourth paper, Jan. 1854, speaking of an ascetic, it is said:

Following his mystic bent he was full of internal visions and revelations. Sometimes according to the mystic school of Paithana, sitting cross-legged, meditating at midnight at the foot of a banyan tree, with his two thumbs closing his ears, and his little fingers pressed upon his eyelids, he saw rolling before him gigantic fiery wheels, masses of serpent shapes, clusters of brilliant jewels, quadrants of pearls, lamps blazing without oil, a white haze melting away into a sea of glittering moonlight, a solitary, fixed, swanlike, fiery eye of intense, ruddy glare, and, at length, *the splendour of an internal light more dazzling than the sun*

or the whole star-paved court of heaven. An internal, spontaneous unproduced music (*anāhata*) vibrated on his ear; and sometimes a sweet mouth, sometimes a majestic nose, sometimes a whole face of exquisite, beseeching beauty, would rise out of a cloud before his inward, gnostic eye, look into his soul, and advance to embrace him.

At other times he followed the path laid down by the more ancient and profounder school of Alandi and strove to attain the condition of the illumined Yogi as described by Krishna to Arjuna in the 6th *adhyāya* of that most mystic of all mystic books, the *Jñāneśvari*.

“THE ILLUMINED.

“When this path is beheld, then hunger and thirst are forgotten, night and day are undistinguished in this path.

* * * * *

Reprinted from the January 1888 issue of *The Theosophist*.

Yoga Philosophy

“Whether one would set out to the bloom of the East or come to the chambers of the West, *without moving*, O holder of the bow, *is the travelling in this road*. In this path, to whatever place one would go, *that place one’s own self becomes!* How shall I easily describe this? Thou thyself shalt experience it.

* * * * *

“The ways of the tubular vessel (nerves) are broken; the nine-fold property of wind (nervous ether) departs, on which account the functions of the body no longer exist.

* * * * *

“Then the moon and the sun, *or that supposition which is so imagined*, appear but like the wind upon a lamp, in such manner as not to be laid hold of. The bud of understanding is dissolved, the sense of smell no longer remains in the nostrils; but, together with the *Power*,* retires into the middle chamber. Then with a discharge from above, the reservoir of moon fluid of immortality (contained in the brain) leaning over on one side, communicates into the mouth of the Power. Thereby the tubes (nerves) are filled with the fluid, it penetrates into all the members; and in every direction the vital breath dissolves thereinto.

“As from the heated crucible all the wax flows out, and it remains thoroughly filled with the molten metal poured in, even so, that lustre (of the immortal moon-fluid) has become actually molded into the shape of the body; on the outside it is wrapped up in the folds of the skin.

“As, wrapping himself in a mantle of clouds, the sun for a while remains, and afterwards, casting it off, comes forth arrayed in light, even so, above is this dry shell of the skin, which, like the husk of grain, of itself falls off.

“Afterwards, such is the splendour of the limbs, that one is perplexed whether it is a self-existent shaft of Kashmir porphyry; or shoots that have sprouted up from jewel seed; or a body moulded of tints caught from the glow of evening; or a pillar formed of the interior light; a vase filled with liquid saffron; or a statue cast of divine thaumaturgic perfection molten down.

“To me it appears Quietism itself, personified with limbs; or is it the disc of the moon, that, fed by the damps of autumn, has put forth luminous beams; or is it the embodied presence of light, that is sitting on yonder seat?

“Such becomes the body; when the serpentine power drinks the moon (fluid of immortality descending from the brain), then, O friend, death dreads the form of the body.

“Then disappears old age, the knots of youth are cut to pieces, and *the lost state of childhood reappears*. His age remains the same as before, but in other respects he exhibits the strength of childhood, the greatness of his fortitude is beyond comparison. As the golden tree from the extremities of its branches puts forth new jewel-buds daily, so new and beautiful nails sprout forth (from his fingers and toes).

“He gets new teeth also, but these shine

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inexpressibly beautiful, like rows of diamonds set on either side. The palms of the hands and soles of the feet become like red lotus flowers; the eyes grow inexpressibly clear.

“As when, from the cramped state of its interior, the pearls can no longer be held in by the double shell, then the seam of the pearl oyster rim bursts open, so, uncontainable within the clasp of the eyelids, the sight, expanding, seeks to go outwards; it is the same indeed as before, but is now capable of embracing the heavens. *Then he beholds the things beyond the sea, he hears the language of paradise, he perceives what is passing in the mind of the ant.* He takes a turn with the wind; if he walk, his footsteps touch not the water.

“Finally, — when the light of the Power disappears, then the form of the body is lost; then he becomes hidden from the eyes of the world. In other respects, as before, he appears with the members of his body, but he is as one *formed of the wind*. Or like the core of the plantain tree standing up divested of its mantle of outward leaves, or as a cloud from which limbs have sprouted out. Such becomes his body; then he is called Khechara, or Sky-goer; this step, being attained is a wonder among people in the body.”

The process here described seems similar to that described in the *Ouphnekhat*:

With your heel stop the fundament, then draw the lower air upwards by the right side, make it turn thrice round the second region of the body, thence bring it to the

navel, thence to the middle of the heart, then to the throat, then to the sixth region, which is the interior of the nose, between the eyelids; there retain it; it is become the breath of the universal soul. Then meditate on the great Om, the universal voice which fills all, the voice of God; it makes itself heard to the ecstatic in ten manners.

The first is like the voice of a sparrow, the second is twice as loud as the first, the third like the sound of a cymbal, the fourth like the murmur of a great shell, the fifth like the chant of the *vina*, the sixth like the sound of the *tāl*, the seventh like the sound of a bamboo flute placed near the ear, the eighth the sound of the instrument *pahaoujd* struck with the hand, the ninth like the sound of a small trumpet, the tenth like the rumbling of a thundercloud. At each of these sounds the ecstatic passes through various states until the tenth *when he becomes God*.

At the first all the hairs on his body stand up. At the second his limbs are benumbed. At the third he feels in all his members the exhaustion of excess. At the fourth his head turns, he is as it were intoxicated.

At the fifth, *the water of life* flows back into his brain. At the sixth this water descends into and nourishes him. At the seventh he becomes master of the vision, he sees into men's hearts, he hears the most distant voices.

At the ninth he feels himself to be so subtle that he can transport himself where he will, and, like the Devas, see all without being seen. At the tenth he becomes the universal

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and indivisible voice, he is the creator, the eternal, exempt from change; and, become perfect repose, he distributes repose to the world.

Compare this with Thomas Vaughan
— *Anima Magica Abscondita*:

This mystery is finished when the light in a sudden miraculous coruscation darts from the centre to the circumference,

and the divine Spirit has so swallowed up the body that it is a glorious body shining like the sun and moon. In this rotation it doth pass, and no sooner, from the natural to the supernatural state, for it is no more fed with visibles, but with invisibles and the eye of the creator is perpetually upon it. After this the material parts are never more seen. ✧

Endnotes

* Note from *Dublin University Magazine*: — This extraordinary Power who is termed elsewhere the World Mother — the casket of Supreme Spirit, is technically called Kundalini, serpentine or annular. Some things related of it would make one imagine it to be electricity personified.

[T]he adept sees and feels and lives in the very source of all fundamental truths — the Universal Spiritual Essence of Nature, Siva the Creator, the Destroyer, and the Regenerator. As Spiritualists of today have degraded “spirit”, so have the Hindus degraded Nature by their Anthropomorphic conceptions of it. Nature alone can incarnate the Spirit of limitless contemplation. "Absorbed in the absolute self-unconsciousness of physical *Self*, plunged in the depths of true Being, which is no being but eternal, universal Life, his whole form as immovable and white as the eternal summits of snow in Kailasa where he sits, above care, above sorrow, above sin and worldliness, a mendicant, a sage, a healer, the King of Kings, the Yogi of Yogis", such is the ideal Siva of *Yoga-Sastras* the culmination of *Spiritual Wisdom*. . . . Oh, ye Max Mullers and Monier Williamses, what have ye done with our Philosophy?

Koot Hoomi
The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett (Chron. Edition)
Letter No. 17 (ML-31)

What Is Our Role in Education?

CLEMICE PETTER

MOST of us are aware of the problems that we, as humanity, are facing in the modern world. There is no need to repeat them or detail what is going on. It is clear that we are facing a crisis without precedents in human history. If one keeps up with the daily news, one cannot help being worried and deeply saddened about the horrific events that are taking place all over the planet.

The question that we are asking today, “What is our role in education?” is very relevant for those who are serious and feel the urge for change. This is because it is out of our schools that those who are going to rule the world are coming, and it has been our educational system that has made it possible for dictators and criminals to play havoc in more than one country.

Highly intellectualized people, with a dry heart, are the result of our erroneous ideas about education. There are two aspects in this question that we would like to explore today. One is: “What is the role of each one, yours and mine, as individuals, in education?” The other is: “What is the role of an organization, such as the Theosophical Society (TS), in education?”

We may be under the impression that the responsibility for education is with the teachers in the schools, and that you and I, who have not undertaken that vital task in a professional manner, have no business in education; therefore, we can just live our lives without giving much thought to the subject. And this seems to be another mistake.

What do we mean when we say “education”? It has been one of our errors to believe that education is to instruct, to train the child in mathematics, history, geography, and so on. For too long we have believed that academic training is education. But if we look closely into the world that this so-called education has created, we will soon recognize that we are paying a high price for this deadly mistake.

For generations we have been developing the capacity of the mind, the mechanical, blind intellect. We have worshiped it as the new god, in modern society. The explosion of technology has made us proud and we have forgotten that technology is but the outcome of the mechanical, the machinery, the trained mind. We are not trying to crucify technology; we are

Ms Clemice Petter is Head of the Editorial Department at Adyar. Talk delivered at the World Congress, Singapore, on 5 August 2018.

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just pointing out the fact that we have developed only the material aspect of human life and neglected the more important, which is the heart, the spirit.

We have become clever and insensitive. And this is the result of a belief that all we need we can find within the mind. But, as H. P. Blavatsky (HPB) said:

Ignorance is like unto a closed and airless vessel; the soul a bird shut up within. . . . and of exhaustion dies. But even ignorance is better than head-learning with no Soul-Wisdom to illuminate and guide it.

The Voice of the Silence

Today we can see how tragic head-learning can be.

Our much-boasted achievements in technology are creating hell on Earth. The poor cows are milked night and day without mercy, chickens are made to eat without rest. It is unnecessary to keep pointing out the hellish scenario created by a super mind, with no intelligence behind to guide it into a humane, spiritual way of life. We are made to believe that all is fine, that technology is the best thing that ever happened to humanity. But the reality is quite different, and if we look with care, we will see that the price we are paying for a hot bath is far too high.

We have been made insensitive by schools training, molding, and directing our minds. We cannot see the suffering that is going on in the world because we are experts in seeing only the “good” side of things. “Don’t be pessimistic, look at the good side of things”, is the mantra of modern society. The fact is that it is too

late to be either a pessimist or optimist; we need to be realistic and look at life as it *is*.

We need to take responsibility for what is going on in the world that we have created, and see it as it really is, not as it should be — the ideal, which is another form of distraction and avoidance of the fact, and leads nowhere other than where we are. There is no good and no bad, there are only facts. Good and bad is the creation of the mind, which by nature is blind, and therefore cannot see the fact, so it divides and classifies as “good” or “bad”.

What is each one’s responsibility in education? First, we need to learn to look, to listen; basically, we need to learn. Even this simple and basic act is buried under the huge amount of training we have received throughout our life, and we do not know what it means to be constantly learning. To learn about life we need to be free from psychological, accumulated knowledge, and store only that which is essential in day-to-day life. To learn we need to be in a state of “not-knowing”, which is very difficult for most of us, because we have been trained to know, to hold conclusions. So the first step in education is to educate ourselves; and, of course, in this process of learning about ourselves we are helping the whole of humanity.

The process of education has more to do with learning than with teaching. This is nothing new. It has been said long ago that the real teacher is the one who helps the pupil to bring out that which is already inside himself. The great majority gathered here today has read at least once that all

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we need to know lies within us. Therefore, we all know that the movement that takes place in education is not from the outer to the inner, but it is always an awakening of that which already lies dormant inside.

The effort required is not to load, but to remove obstacles that are blocking the flow from within. And those obstacles are created by the mind, they are the endless cravings that need to be seen and let go of. We need to learn to look, to see what we are in reality, not in some theory.

It seems to me, that the basic thing to understand about education is that we need to learn, and that we can only teach while we learn. Therefore, being in a state of constant learning is the only way to teach. This may sound a bit strange because we are so used to go out, to instruct “others” in what is right and wrong. It has been this attitude that has brought about violence, and brutality, with all its dreadful children.

Because, if I know what is right, it means I have come to a conclusion to be imposed upon you. And if you refuse to live according to my conclusion, I judge you; and because I have a certain authority, certain powers, you are afraid; and out of fear you bend. But what we do not see is that fear carries in it the seeds of violence, and it will grow in many directions, spread like a weed, and create the world so familiar to each one of us.

Now, what is the role of a organization such as the TS in education? This question is important because most of us, members of this Society, are interested in giving

something to the world, which also means education. We would like to teach something to the world. HPB said that the TS came into being to let the world know that such a thing as Theosophy exists.

So how are we going to let the world know about Theosophy? How are we going to teach the world about Love and Compassion, about Wisdom? There is no way to teach, other than by example. We need to be a living example that human beings can live together with respect and care for each other, that it is possible to create a balance between the mind and the heart. This is not only within the TS, but wherever we are, in our daily life, with our children, servants, friends, and so on.

How are we to do that? Since we know, and it has been pointed out, that human weaknesses are the same outside as well as inside the TS, what is it that makes it possible for us, those inside the TS, to teach those who are outside? Is it the fact that we have read certain books? But then, all religions also have books which they consider to be sacred. Therefore it does not seem to be about books.

Maybe the secret is that we are willing to learn, because this is all we can do. To learn to let go of the things of the mind. To learn to empty the mind and, as it empties itself, it gives way to the flow that comes from the heart. And, as we learn, we teach. It is one movement that occurs at the same time. There is no such thing as the one who “knows” and now will teach. There are only those who are willing to learn and the constant learning is the teaching.

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If we, as a group, wish to enter the arena of teaching children, how would that be? Those who are open to the movement of life and learn with everything, at every moment, people in this state of mind would decide to help children to see the importance of being open and to never close the door and say “I know”. To help the child to allow that which is already sown within herself to flourish and spread its perfume into the world. Where shall we start?

First of all, we need to create a space where the child is free to explore without being judged or repressed. A place where she feels safe and secure to ask questions and learn more about the question than to get ready-made answers. A place where fear cannot enter, where fear is not allowed to make a home in the temple of life. A school is the place where the heart can develop and sensitivity is part of day-to-day activities.

It is of fundamental importance to create balance between mind and heart. It is important to remember that when we talk about the development of the heart, we are not talking about becoming emotional, because emotions are also part of the mind. Balance between mind and heart brings about something completely different from the known emotions. It has

a quality that cannot be known by the mind. It is born when mind and heart come together as the male and female reproductive cells come together and generate a completely new being.

In the same way, when mind and heart are balanced and come together at the same level, it opens the door to the dimension of Compassion, which is the child of balance.

If we look at the world created by the unbalanced growth of the mind, neglecting the heart, we will see that the solution is to bring harmony and balance. That to heal the degeneration that has taken place because of lack of intelligence, we need to remove the stones of ignorance and allow the flow of love to run free. After all, only those who know Love can, and will, take up the responsibility of learning with everything and everyone.

To learn to live a spiritual life, to connect with Nature and heal the planet, is our role in education. It is the role of real spiritual people to find the way out of the destructive, materialistic way of living that is destroying the very womb in which we are developing the real, the inner being, so that we can have a new chapter in the human history on this planet — an era of peace and spiritual development. And the time to do it is now; there is no tomorrow.

Intelligence is the capacity to perceive the essential, the what is; and to awaken this capacity, in oneself and in others, is education.

J. Krishnamurti

Theosophical Work around the World

World Congress — Singapore

The 11th World Congress of the Theosophical Society (TS) was held in Singapore from 4 to 8 August 2018 on “Consciousness, Contemplation, Commitment: The Future Is Now”. Participants from Argentina, Australia, Bangladesh, Belgium, Brazil, England, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Italy, Malaysia, Myanmar, Netherlands, New Zealand, Philippines, Singapore, Sweden, and USA started arriving on the evening of 3 August. The Singapore Lodge organizing team worked many months, making sure that all was ready to receive these students of Theosophy.

The Congress opening was a shower of greetings from members of the Society and well-wishers from all over the globe for the work of the TS — the awakening of the human consciousness. In his opening address the international President, Mr Tim Boyd, reminded the participants about the implications of coming together to discuss and grow deeper in understanding of the work that is embraced when connecting with the TS. He pointed out the value of being open to allow the influence of Those who stand behind the theosophical movement to make their love present in the gathering, bringing about a powerful potential for the future. Another important reminder was what has been said, that wherever two or more people gather in the name of a deeper, more resonant presence, that presence

makes itself known. The President also gave a lecture that evening on “A Theosophy for Tomorrow” (see article in this issue), and a public talk the following evening on “The Intuitive Mind”.

In his keynote address, Mr Marcos Resende, former General Secretary (GS) of the Brazilian Section, stressed how important it is for human beings to go beyond the frontiers of the mind and overcome the suffering and limitations created by ignorance of who we are and the fear of not knowing what lies in the future. On the next day, “Consciousness, Compassion, and Contemplation” was the topic of international Vice-President Deepa Padhi’s talk. She explored the different aspects of consciousness illuminated by the studies of Annie Besant and the teachings of the *Bhagavadgītā* and H. P. Blavatsky. She also made clear that a contemplative life is the way to understand the depth of life.

What is contemplation, what does it mean to adopt a contemplative life, and how is it possible to live in such a way in our contemporary world, were the questions explored in depth by Mrs Linda Oliveira, GS of the Australian Section, during her lecture on “Contemplative Living in the Modern World” (see article in this issue). Also “A Study in Consciousness”, based on Annie Besant’s book, was the topic of Mr Chong Sanne’s talk. He is the Presidential Representative for East and Southeast Asia as well as President of the Singapore Lodge.

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An online lecture by Dr Cassandra Vieten, President of the Institute of Noetic Sciences in California, was the first online lecture given in a World Congress. She has studied how people transform their way of looking at the world. With a focus on spirituality in mental health care and the results of meditation, she also works with virtual reality approaches to induce perspective-shifting experiences that change people's lives.

The international Treasurer, who is also International Secretary of the Theosophical Order of Service (TOS), Ms Nancy Secrest, talked about the progress of the Order from the time of its foundation by Annie Besant to our days. She also discussed the questions: What will tomorrow bring? How will this changing world affect our endeavors? An interesting session facilitated a closer look at the online resource centre <theosophy.world>, led by Mr Richard Sell, President of the HPB Lodge in New Zealand, and Mr John Vorstermans, GS of the TS in the same country.

Other presentations were given by Mr Pradeep Gohil, GS of the Indian Section, who enlightened the audience with a talk on "Conscious, Subconscious, and Unconscious Mind in Our Daily Life". Ms Ng Ay Na, President of the Selangor Lodge in Malaysia, highlighted the three Objects of the Society. Mrs Lily Chong, Secretary of the Singapore Lodge, talked about "Prayer — Its Nature, Different Types, and Efficacy". She examined methods for answering prayers, how we should pray, and prayers for the departed. Ms Krista

Umbjarv, Secretary of the European Federation, explored the theme: "Theosophy — An Unceasing Path of Self-discovery". Mrs Clemice Petter, Head of the Editorial Department in Adyar, questioned "What Is Our Role in Education?" and stressed the urgent need to eradicate fear from education (see article in this issue).

On 5 and 6 August, six groups explored different topics to be chosen according to the participants' interests: "Meditation in the Light of Theosophy" was conducted by Ms Trân-Thi-Kim-Diêu from France; "Yoga Philosophy Applied to Theosophical Work" by Mr Ricardo Lindemann from Brazil; "Activating Engaged Membership" by Mrs Patrizia Calvi from Italy; "New Ways of Making Theosophy Known" by Mr Pedro Oliveira from Australia and Mr Wim Leys from the Netherlands; "Establishing Theosophical Schools" by Mr Vicente Hao Chin, Jr, from the Philippines; and "Utilizing Theosophical Centres" by Mr Minor Lile from USA and Mrs Els Rijneker from the Netherlands.

The last day of the Congress started with a panel for answering written questions by interested members. It was composed of Mr Gohil, Mr Hao Chin, Jr, Mrs Oliveira, Mr Boyd, and was moderated by Mrs Renee Sell. This session was followed with a lecture by Mr Hao Chin, Jr, "Our Work in the 21st Century", during which he explored vital questions such as: Are we getting relatively weaker? What should be our thrust so that theosophical wisdom will become part of social and global change?

Theosophical Work around the World



International President Tim Boyd delivering the Opening Address at the Theosophical Society World Congress (TSWC) held at the Ramada Hotel in Singapore on 4 August 2018



The international Vice-President, Mrs Deepa Padhi, giving a talk at the TSWC on the topic “Consciousness, Compassion, and Contemplation” on 5 August

Theosophical Work around the World



Vic Hao Chin, Jr, President of the Golden Link Theosophical College in the Philippines, leading an exploratory group on “Establishing Theosophical Schools”, at the TSWC on 5 August



Four exploratory groups out of the six that discussed different subjects during the TSWC on 5 and 6 August at the Ramada Singapore

Theosophical Work around the World

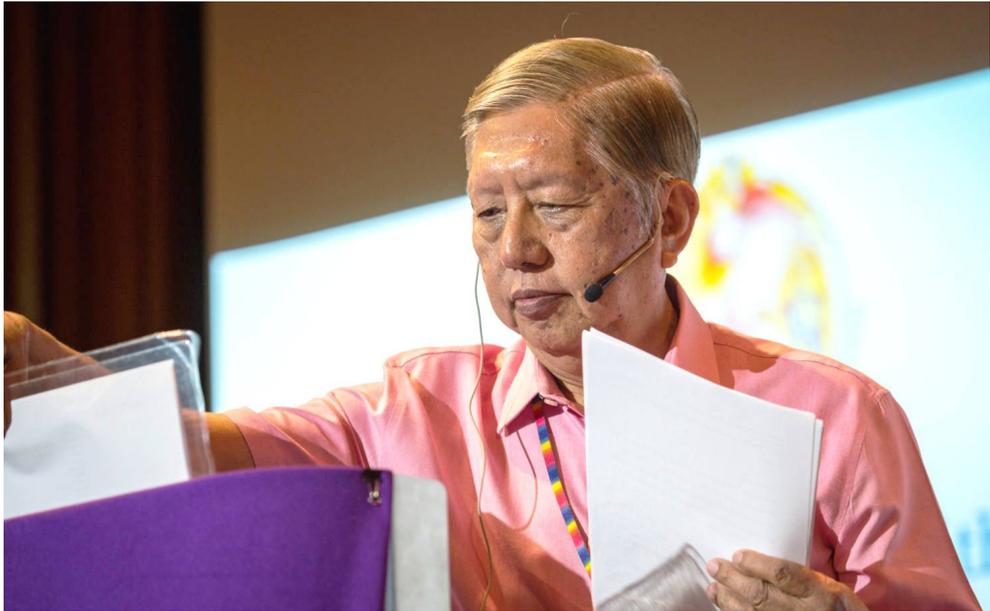


President Boyd giving an evening public lecture on
“The Intuitive Mind” at RELC Auditorium in Singapore on 5 August



Mrs Lily Chong, Secretary of the Singapore TS Lodge, giving a talk on
“Prayer — Its Nature, Types, and Efficacy” at the TSWC on 6 August

Theosophical Work around the World



Chong Sanne, Presidential Representative of the TS in East and Southeast Asia and President of the Singapore Lodge, giving a lecture on “A Study in Consciousness” at the TSWC on 6 August



Mrs Linda Oliveira, General Secretary of the TS in Australia, delivering a lecture at the TSWC on “Contemplative Living in the Modern World” on 7 August

Theosophical Work around the World

Each World Congress is held in different countries. It is a unique opportunity for strengthening the bonds with fellow members and the work of the Society. We are grateful to all participants in the audience, meetings, exploratory groups, collaborators, and those who watched online. All the cultural programs were appreciated for the richness of their art and creativity. Videos of most Congress programs and a link to photos are available at: <ts-adyar.org/content/world-congress-videos>.

Theosophical Order of Service (TOS)

The TOS held their 4th International Conference on 9 to 11 August at the Ramada Singapore. Every five years, TOS members from around the world gather to report the results of their previous Action Plans and make plans for the next five years. Most “TOSers” enjoyed the World Congress (WC) activities too, which included a presentation by International Secretary Nancy Secrest on “TOS: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow”, the TOS Conference theme. She spoke of the beginnings of the TOS and showed current activities of many TOS countries worldwide. In Mr Vicente Hao Chin’s presentation at the WC, “Our Work in the 21st Century”, he put forth the example of the TOS as “the most important existing avenue of applied Theosophy for the public”.

TOS President Tim Boyd set the tone with his Inaugural Address, reminding the participants about the various aspects

of service by using examples from his own life. Reports on the achievement of goals set at the last TOS Conference were given by representatives from the TOS in Australia, India, and the USA. Presentations made by Italy, Hungary, India, the Philippines, Pakistan, and Singapore gave detailed pictures of their projects. They touched hearts while instilling fresh ideas for service in other TOS countries.

The next day brought talks on “Service: Who, What, Why?” Isis Resende from Brazil, Renee Sell of New Zealand, Antonio Girardi from the Italian TOS, and Helmut Vandersmissen of Belgium were inspiring with their answers to these questions. Mr Hao Chin’s major address, “Root Causes and Symptoms”, showed why we need service, and Carol Nicholson’s presentation on instruction and inspiration through the use of webinars illustrated how a practice available to all today can help bring humanity to the edge of tomorrow. Armed with these facts, examples, and inspiration the real work of developing plans for the next five years began. Action Plans were created and shared with all present. The conference ended with a TOS peace meditation written by a group of members from around the world.

Recent Changes

On 22 July 2018 Mrs Isabel Torales was elected President of Lodge Fraternidad, in Paraguay, attached to Adyar, succeeding Mr Antonio Castillo. ✧

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